

MILL

DRAWER 12

NEW SALE

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# Illinois New Salem

## Mill

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

### That Old Mill.

Correspondence of Clinton Public.

KUMLER, Ill., Oct. 11.—It has been going the rounds of the papers, and yours not excepted, that the old mill alluded to in Menard County, on the Sangamon River, was built by W. G. Green in 1830, and he took Abraham Lincoln in as a partner. I am an old settler, and lived within one mile of that mill nearly a half a century ago, when it belonged to Sangamon County, and I know whereof I speak. That old mill was built by Jacob Bailes, and in 1844 the big freshet washed out the dam and wrecked the mill. It stood idle for several years, and Jacob Bailes and his wife died. Then the old mill and what belonged to it was bought by Abraham Bailes, a brother to the deceased Bailes, and he rebuilt the old mill. He also died, and his sons took charge of the mill. Abraham Lincoln never had anything to do with the mill in any way, for he had nothing with which to build a mill or anything else. Lincoln lived with old Boling Green, about one mile below this mill. Green was a justice of the peace and Lincoln commenced the practice of law before him, and suc-

ceeded so well that he went to Springfield and studied law with S. T. Logan. Squire Green furnished the money to buy books for Lincoln. I mention this to show that Lincoln had no money with which to buy a mill or an interest in a grocery, as published. There was a grocery, or what would now be known as a saloon, kept on a bluff in a place called New Salem. Lincoln was a clerk in the place, but he was never known to be a partner in any business there until he commenced practicing law at Springfield. It is said that the old mill is burned down. Peace be to its ashes.

AN OLD SETTLER.

Jan. 1884

Petersburg Democrat 11-18-21

## DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN OLD SALEM MILL BURNED?

Few of our citizens under fifty years of age remember having seen the mill at Old Salem, and very few of those even older remember when it burned. The files of The Democrat fix the date as Sunday night, September, 23, 1883, more than thirty-eight years ago. The following account of the event, written by this scribe, appeared in The Democrat of September 29, 1883:

### GROUND ITS LAST GRIST.

The mill at Old Salem, about two miles south of Petersburg, was consumed by fire about eight o'clock last Sunday night, while its owner was attending church in town. The light of the conflagration was seen by a good many of our citizens, some of whom went out but arrived too late to do any effectual work toward saving the structure. There had been no fire about the mill, so the owner says, for several days, and the blaze is supposed to have been the work of an incendiary. This theory is supported by the fact that a padlock which fastened the lower outside door was found on the bluff next morning, unlocked. The mill was originally built by John Cameron and James Rutledge about the year 1829. It had passed through a number of hands since then and had been so altered that naught of the old building remained except, perhaps, some of the upright timbers. F. V. Bale was the latest proprietor and had managed the business of the mill for a number of years. \* \* \*

With the destruction of this mill is obliterated the last landmark of what has become a historic spot through having been the home of Abraham Lincoln in the days of his early manhood.

## CCC Restoring Lincoln's Mill In State Park

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.—(U.P.)—The historic Rutledge-Cameron mill, once operated by Abraham Lincoln, is being rebuilt on a shady bend in the Sangamon River to become a part of one of Lincoln's most lasting memories, the New Salem, Ill., state park.

Lincoln, as a youth, pushed his flatboat from the side of the mill to begin his historic trip down the river to Beardstown. On his return, he operated both the Denton Offut store and the combination grist and sawmill.

Now 110 years old, the mill has degenerated into a pile of decaying logs. Until two years ago the exact site of the structure was unknown, but enough of the remains were uncovered to ascertain the size of the mill and the capacity of its operation.

The restored structure is being constructed by the CCC from new materials, most of them native oak, but concrete will be used in the foundation for reinforcement. All modern materials will be covered by logs and stone, however.

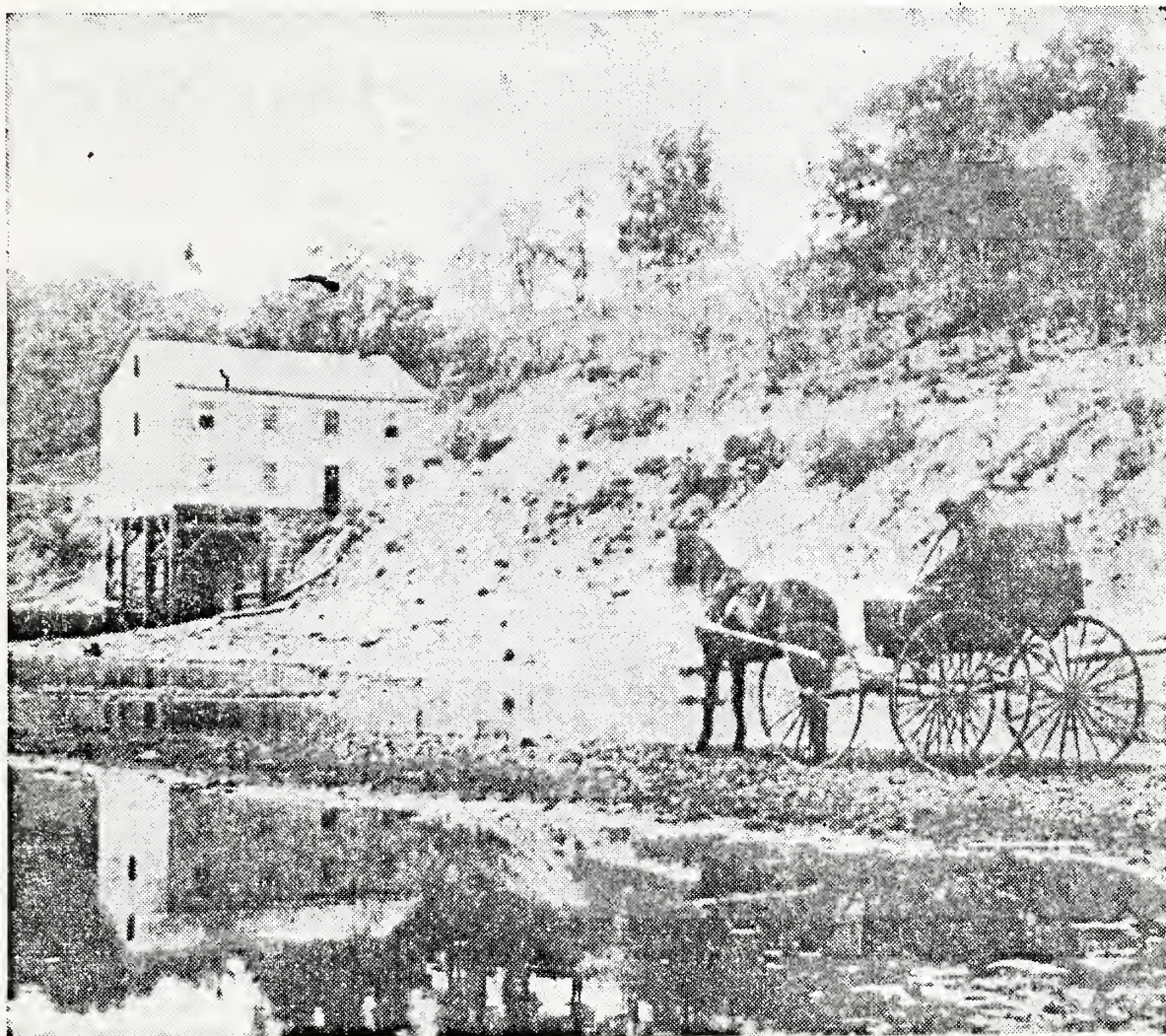
The grist mill was housed in a permanent structure on the upstream side of the river and the sawmill in a lean-to on the other side. The grist mill was operated with a turbine-type tub wheel and the saw-mill with an undershot wheel, both used in streams where there was not an extremely high watershed.

A model built by Henry Armstrong, national park service foreman, is being employed to guide construction work. Rex Brown, superintendent of the project, estimated it would take a year to complete.

*September 15, 1939*  
*New Sentinel*



## *New Salem Mill Had Foundation Rich In Lincoln Lore*



Shown in this picture is the New Salem mill. The Rutledge and Cameron mills, of which Abraham Lincoln had charge at one time, stood on the same spot as the mill in the picture and had the same foundation. James Rutledge was the father of Ann Rutledge, whom Lincoln loved.

# Mill Where Lincoln Worked Being Rebuilt At New Salem

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (UP)—Another step in the restoration of New Salem, the log cabin frontier town in which Abraham Lincoln spent his youth, will be completed in June with the opening of the Denton Offut Mill at which Lincoln worked as a hand in 1831-32.

The original mill was built in 1828 by James Rutledge, father of Lincoln's sweetheart, Ann, and John Cameron, co-founders of the village of New Salem. Later it was sold to Denton Offut.

Reporting on progress of the restoration project, Charles Casey, director of the public works department, which is supervising the work, said, "the mill would be a Lincoln relic of great importance even had Lincoln never spent eight months operating it for Offut."

"Historians have pointed out that if Lincoln's flatboat had not stranded on the mill dam in 1830, he would not have returned to the village the following year and today even the memory of New Salem would be lost," Casey said.

## Mill Had Two Wheels

"The original mill built of logs had two wheels, one to grind corn and grain, the other to saw logs. The wheel for the sawmill rotated on a vertical shaft with the flow of water through an opening in the dam. The other was undershot and operated by a flow of water against its blades."

Casey said the restored mill is now more than 75 per cent completed, with the dam nearing its final stages and wooden and metal gears and

parts in storage awaiting installation. The mill will be in operation in June, he said, "and will add immeasurably to the village."

After much study and discussion, he said, the dam and mill are being rebuilt on their original locations, despite difficulties resulting from topographical changes in the last 100 years since the village declined and was abandoned.

## River's Course Shifts

When the state first began restoration work at the village, architects found that the Sangamon River, on which the mill was located, had altered its course around the dam to the right, and back in front of the dam again where it bends sharply right.

To restore the dam exactly as it was on its original site would have entailed much expense in recouring the river, buying land and erecting flood levees. It was finally agreed to build a mill pond, drawing water from the river, to power the dam.

The pond, for which 27 acres was purchased, is under construction south of the dam. A pumping station to supply river water is nearly completed. The 27 acres were necessary for landscaping, disposal of excess excavation and to provide a proper mill setting.

Upon completion, the restored mill will be operated by an attendant dressed in the blue jeans and cambric shirt of the 1830 period. Cornmeal will be ground and sold in small quantities in mealsacks bearing a likeness of the backwoods youth who later became President. At regular intervals, the saw mill will cut lumber from logs.



## Francis G. Blair To Speak Tonight

### First Methodist Church Plans Discussion.

Francis G. Blair, former state superintendent of public instruction, will discuss the man's point of view on the question "What is Christianity?" at 7:30 p. m. today at the First Methodist church, in



FRANCIS G. BLAIR.

the first of a series of Sunday evening discussion services sponsored by the lay organizations of that church. The public is invited to attend.

A special song service under the direction of Laurence R. Cadwell, nationally known Y.M.C.A. song leader, featuring congregational singing of hymns illustrated by lantern slides, will open the service. Mr. Cadwell is a graduate of the Y.M.C.A. college in Chicago and has conducted group singing for many years at the Chicago Y.M.C.A. hotel and at the Detroit Y.M.C.A. in addition to summer Y.M.C.A. camp work.

Tonight's service will inaugurate a series of discussion meetings at which the lay organizations of the First Methodist church will seek to

## Restored Mill At New Salem To Recall Times Of Lincoln

The opening of the restored New Salem mill on the Sangamon river next June will recall many incidents in Abraham Lincoln's career as a mill hand, Charles P. Casey, director of the department of public works and buildings, reported yesterday in summarizing the progress of work at the village.

Casey reported the restoration of the mill is more than 75 per cent completed. "The dam is now nearing its final stages," Casey said, "Wooden gears and metal parts are in storage awaiting installation, and the rest of the necessary construction is progressing rapidly. The mill will be in actual operation next June and will add to the attractiveness of the village."

During the last 100 years, the Sangamon river has altered its course around the old dam. Because of the channel change, state park officials found that to restore the dam exactly as it was on its original site would require changing the river back to its initial course. This would have been an expensive undertaking, Casey said.

State architects finally agreed to allow the river to maintain its present channel and build the dam on its original site, powering the mill with impounded water. A mill pond is now under construction south of the dam to be supplied with water pumped from the river. A pumping station which will pump the water from the river to the pond is almost completed.

In order to construct the mill pond, dispose of the excess excavation, provide a proper setting for the mill, and landscape the historical spot, it was necessary for the state to purchase twenty-seven additional acres of land.

The mill will be operated by an attendant dressed in blue jeans and cambric shirt of the 1830's. Cornmeal will be ground and sold in small quantities in meal sacks bearing a likeness of the youthful Lincoln. The saw mill, with a vertical saw, will also be in operation.

"The original mill building," Casey said, "was walled with logs, with stone filling to add to its stability. It was operated by two large wheels, one to saw logs and the other to grind corn and smaller grain. The wheel which powered the sawmill was a turbine which rotated on a vertical shaft with the

flow of water through an opening in the dam. The second wheel which transmitted its power to the stone burrs was undershot and operated by the flow of water against its blades.

The mill was built in 1828 by James Rutledge and John Camron, co-founders of the village of Salem. Lincoln operated the mill in 1831-32 for eight months for Denton Offut.

Jan. 11, 1941

## Old Lincoln Mill Rebuilt as in 1831

*Work Will Be Completed in  
June at New Salem, Ill.*

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. — Another step in the restoration of New Salem, the log cabin frontier town in which Abraham Lincoln spent his youth, will be completed in June with the opening of the Denton Offut mill at which Lincoln worked as a hand in 1831-32.

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*Women in Great Britain*



## Joseph Booton, "Wizard Without a Wand"

Joseph Booton deserves something more than an obituary. His work for the state in the 1930s and 40s left a profound mark on many of the historic sites that the Department of Conservation today oversees. He died in October 1983, at age 86, after an architectural career spanning five decades.



Joseph Booton in 1944

Joseph Booton was first chief draftsman and later chief of design in the state's Division of Architecture and Engineering from 1930-1952. Those are the kinds of titles bureaucrats give to jobs that do not adequately describe their responsibilities. Briefly put, Booton was the architect for the 1930s reconstruction of New Salem, the village Abraham Lincoln lived in from 1831-1837. For years Booton worked on a number of reconstruction projects for the state—Vandalia Statehouse, Fort de Chartres, Cahokia Courthouse, and others—but New Salem, his first historical project, was the true measure of his capabilities.

What I know of Booton I know through transcripts of interviews conducted long after he left the state's employ. The interviews are insightful. When asked in a 1974 interview why he had insisted on authenticity in the New Salem reconstruction, he said, "It was just within my bones, I guess, to try to get this restoration just as accurately as we could." When asked about the roles of his coworkers, he invariably said

something complimentary of them. "Wonderful fellow," "very friendly," "very cooperative" is how he described those with whom he'd come in contact. Of Jerome Ray, his assistant and "good lieutenant," Booton said, "I can't give Jerry praise enough."

His publications, which served as records of his work, particularly at New Salem, are also telling. "We are not creating stage settings," he wrote in an article titled "Wizards Without Wands" (*Illinois Public Works*, 1944). What Booton wanted to do was make things look and work as they once did. His painstaking research on the mill at New Salem culminated in an authentic water-powered mill that actually sawed wood. The "CCC boys" (Civilian Conservation Corps) tested it during high water and "by golly it worked good," he proudly claimed.

Booton's work at historic sites was even more remarkable because he was not a historian by training, but an architect. Much to the benefit of later researchers, he left behind his notes, impressions, and articles—all evidence of his methodology. His "Record of the Restoration of New Salem" (a red-bound book because Booton's boss

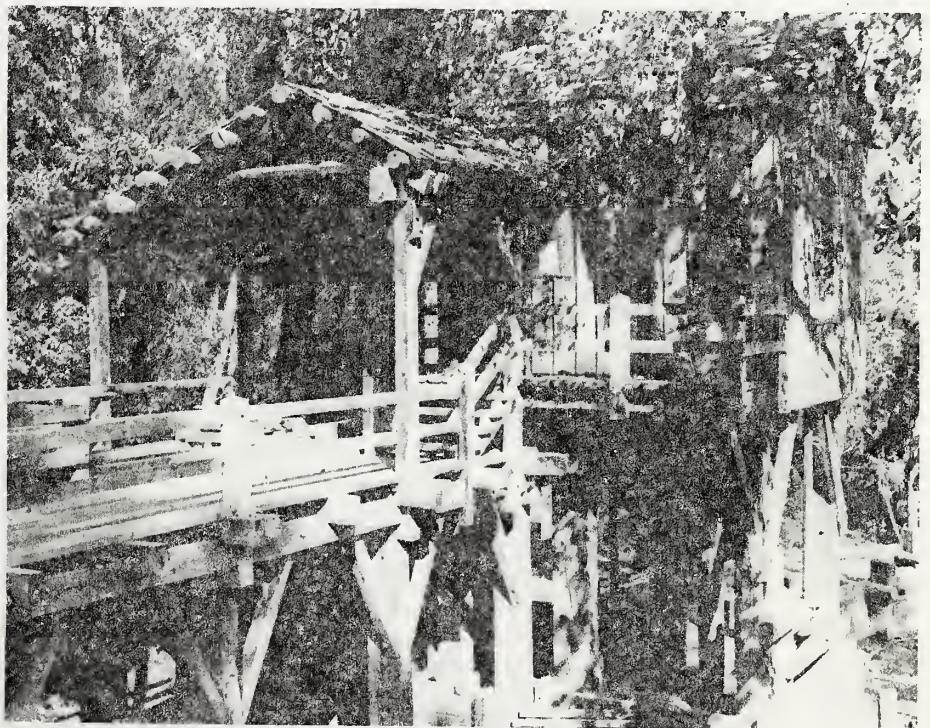
believed "there was no book worth reading that wasn't bound in red") is used today to assist in the site's interpretation.

As the restoration projects tapered off in the late forties Booton worked on other state projects before joining a private Chicago architectural firm in 1952. His design work was very different but no less notable. Log cabins and commemorative structures gave way to hospitals and public buildings.

"Booton's work at New Salem and a dozen other historic sites is the foundation of much work done since. 'A completed historical restoration, well done, excites the imagination and enthusiasm,'" Booton wrote in "Wizards Without Wands." Forty years later, visitors to the dozen or so sites that he worked on can attest to that.

Evelyn R. Moore

*Joseph Booton's contribution to preservation in Illinois is documented in Charles B. Hosmer's excellent book Preservation Comes of Age. The book contains a concise section on the Illinois preservation program during the 1930s and 40s.*



The grist mill at New Salem, reconstructed under the direction of Joseph Booton.

